

# TriMet bus line to cross bridge, Willamette Shore Trolley to return

## SELLWOOD BRIDGE

By Erik Vidstrand and Don Snedecor  
The Southwest Portland Post

TriMet bus service returns to the Sellwood Bridge on Dec. 5 after a 12-year absence.

Line #99 service will connect the east side with destinations from Lake Oswego to downtown Portland. Bus service ended in 2004 due to reduced weight limits on the old bridge.

As far as the rest of the bridge project is going, final touches are being completed. At press time, bridge spokesman Mike Pullen said that the contractor hoped to have completed major work by Nov. 23.

"We know there will be 'punch list', or clean-up work, continuing for several more months," Pullen told *The Post* which has been covering the construction for years.

"Some of the work that will happen after Thanksgiving is plantings and work on the eastside condos which don't impact bridge users," Pullen explained.

One of the more important tasks still to be completed is the opening of the south sidewalk on the bridge and the bike/pedestrian bridge on the west side that is below the main bridge.

"This bridge connects the westside trail with the south sidewalk of the bridge," Pullen said. A big issue has been traffic.

"The issue we get the most complaints about is the traffic signals at each end of the bridge," he said. "The city [of Portland] transportation bureau owns

and maintains the signals."

Pullen said that drivers northbound on Highway 43 [Southwest Macadam Avenue] complain they have difficulty turning right to go on the bridge because southbound traffic clogs the intersection when their signal is green.

"PBOT is working on the signal and thinks this situation will improve once the contractor is off the bridge completely," Pullen stated.

The trolley corridor between Southwest Miles Street and south of the bridge continues to be a busy work zone as crews reinstall historic trolley tracks. Work has included sub-grade preparation and drainage with sub-ballast gravel, ballast rock, then ties and rails, and finally landscaping along the tracks.

At press time, switches and turnouts were scheduled to be installed by the end of November.

"It's going well," Pullen replied, "but we don't have anything to do with the historic trolley that plans to use the tracks again."

According to Wikipedia, the Willamette Shore Trolley dates back to the 1880s when it was a narrow gauge steam railroad linking Portland to Oswego (as Lake Oswego was known back then) and south into the Willamette Valley.

The line was later purchased by the Southern Pacific Company who widened the line from narrow gauge to standard gauge and electrified it in 1914.

This led to its peak in passenger travel in 1920, when 64 "Red Electric" interurban trains traveled daily between



Laying track for the trolley line south of Freeman Motors.  
(Photo courtesy of Multnomah County)

the two cities.

The line originally ran around Elk Rock – a bend in the river just north of Elk Rock Island – on a long trestle until December 1921, when a tunnel replaced it.

The Elk Rock Tunnel is 1,396 feet (approximately one-quarter mile) in length and is located in the unincorporated Riverwood area, between Portland and Lake Oswego.

On Oct. 5, 1929, passenger service ended, though the line was used for freight until 1983.

A consortium of governments purchased the railroad right-of-way in the 1980s, and managed by the Oregon Electric Railway Historical Society, it has been used as an excursion trolley line for tourists off and on since then.

According to the trolley website,

regular service is expected to resume in May. "The website (<http://wst.oregontrolley.com/>) mentions December trips to see the Christmas ships," Pullen said. "We should have the track work done by end of November."

The public art installation at the east end of the bridge is also on the to-do list. This is the series of metal totems on both sides of Southeast Tacoma Street between Sixth and Grand avenues.

"The art fabricator needs more time and these should be all installed by February 2017," Pullen said.

"Much of our remaining work is weather-dependent," Pullen concluded. "Last-minute schedule changes may be required due to heavy rain."

For more information, visit <http://www.sellwoodbridge.org/>

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